DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 142 608 UD 017 091

AUTHOR Jordan, Vernon E., Jr.
TITLE The Black Presence in Education.
PUB DATE 2 Apr 77
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the National Conference on Educational Issues That Impact on the Black Community

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Community; *Black Education; *Black Power; Black Role; Educational Needs; *Educational Planning; Educational Policy; Educational Problems; Political Influences; *Political Issues; Political Power; *Speeches

ABSTRACT

This is an address by Vernon Jordan, Jr., executive director of the National Urban League. Mr. Jordan notes that for the first time in many years there is a spirit of hope and self-confidence in the black community because of the newly elected national administration. However, the new administration must be sensitive to educational issues affecting blacks. Educational issues resolve themselves into political power issues and the story of black education in America has been a power play between those who deny rights and those who are determined enough to escape the marginal status assigned to them. Conflict centered on educational policy demonstrate two facts: (1) schools are very important, no matter what the experts say, and (2) school systems have as their central function the three S's; sorting, screening, and selecting, not the education of children. Blacks have not made their presence felt to the degree that is necessary. There are issues that go beyond clear ones like curriculum, staffing, and community involvement to which blacks must direct their attention. School financing and whether the Office of Education should remain in HEW or whether it should be a separate department are two such issues. It is concluded that all blacks should adapt a spirit of cooperation and joint helpfulness in order to survive and overcome adversity. (Author/AM)

**********
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
**********

S.

ED142608

ADDRESS BY
VERNON E. JORDAN, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE
AT
NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES
THAT IMPACT ON THE BLACK COMMUNITY
WASHINGTON, D.C.
APRIL 2, 1977

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

# THE BLACK PRESENCE IN EDUCATION

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS THERE IS A SPIRIT OF HOPE AND RENEWED SELF-CONFIDENCE IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY. THE LONG, DARK AGE OF BENIGN NEGLECT AND OF OVERT OPPOSITION TO MINORITIES APPEARS TO HAVE ENDED AND IN ITS PLACE WE HAVE A NEW NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION THAT HAS DEMONSTRATED ITS SKILL IN MANIPULATING THE SYMBOLS OF POWER IN SUCH A WAY AS TO ENGENDER HOPE AMONG THE VICTIMS OF THE PAST.

UD 017091

THE SYMBOLISM OF SUCH POPULIST MOVES AS THE PRESIDENT WALKING DOWN PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE DURING THE INAUGURATION, SENDING AMY TO A LARGELY BLACK PUBLIC SCHOOL, SPEAKING TO CITIZENS OVER THE TELEPHONE AND IN A FIRESIDE CHAT, AND STRIPPING HIGH OFFICIALS OF SOME OF THE MORE VISIBLE PERQUISITES OF OFFICE HAVE LED MANY OF US TO BELIEVE THAT BIGGER CHANGES ARE IN STORE.

AND FOR THOSE OF US WITH A SHARPENED SENSE OF HISTORY, THERE WAS A MOVING PIECE OF SYMBOLISM DURING THE INAUGURATION CEREMONIES WHEN A BLACK CHOIR FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ATLANTA SANG THE CIVIL WAR MARCHING SONG, "THE BATTLE HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC" AT THE INAUGURATION OF A PRESIDENT FROM THE DEEP SOUTH.

BUT SYMBOLISM AND POLITICAL THEATRE DON'T PUT PEOPLE TO WORK. THEY DON'T PUT MONEY IN PEOPLE'S POCKETS. THEY DON'T IMPROVE THE EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN. SO WHILE WE RESPOND TO THE SYMBOLS, NONE OF US CAN AFFORD THE LUXURY OF NOT DEMANDING THE SUBSTANCE OF CHANGE. OUR MANY CONCERNED ORGANIZATIONS GATHERED HERE TO FORMULATE AN ALLIANCE TO GIVE OUR CHILDREN THE SCHOOLING AND SKILLS THEY NEED TO SURVIVE IN THIS OFTEN HOSTILE WORLD, MUST DEMAND SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE; MUST POOL OUR CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES TO MAKE OUR CHILDREN'S LIVES BRIGHTER AND MORE PRODUCTIVE.

FOR THOSE OF US WITH THIS CAUSE FIRMLY IN MIND, OUR HOPE IN THE FUTURE, AND OUR EXPECTATIONS FROM THIS ADMINISTRATION, ARE NOT BASED ON ITS SYMBOLIC ACTS. NOR ARE THEY BASED ON CAMPAIGN PROMISES, POLICY STATEMENTS, OR SIMPLE FAITH.

OUR HOPES ARE SOLIDLY BASED ON THE POWER OF THE BLACK VOTE, BECAUSE IT WAS THAT BLACK VOTE THAT TOOK JIMMY CARTER OUT OF A PEANUT WAREHOUSE IN PLAINS AND PUT HIM INTO THE WHITE HOUSE IN WASHINGTON.

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES, AS WE HAVE LEARNED THROUGH OUR LONG, HARD HISTORY, RESOLVE THEMSELVES INTO POLITICAL POWER ISSUES. WHO GOES TO WHICH SCHOOL,

WHAT TEXTS ARE USED, WHERE THE BUSES GO OR EVEN IF THEY RUN AT ALL, AND HOW THE MONEY IS DISTRIBUTED ARE ONLY SUPERFICIALLY EDUCATIONAL ISSUES. THEY ARE IN FACT POLITICAL ISSUES AND SUCH ISSUES ARE UNIVERSALLY RESOLVED BY THE PRUDENT USE OF POLITICAL MUSCLE.

THE BLACK VOTE SENT ONE PRESIDENT INTO RETIREMENT AND GAVE ANOTHER ONE HIS NEW JOB. IN THE PAST REPRESENTATIVES OF INFLUENTIAL VOTING GROUPS HAVE PRESENTED A BILL FOR THEIR SERVICES -- WHETHER IT WAS LABOR GETTING ORGANIZING LAWS OR BUSINESS GETTING REWRITTEN TAX LAWS, POWER BLOCS HAVE ALWAYS CALLED IN THEIR DEBTS. NOW, IT IS OUR TURN. NOW, IT IS BLACK PEOPLE'S TURN TO REMIND THE NEW ADMINISTRATION OF OUR ROLE IN ITS VICTORY, AND TO REMIND IT TOO, THAT WHAT THE BLACK VOTE GIVETH, THE BLACK VOTE CAN TAKETH AWAY.

THUS, IT IS NOW THE TURN OF BLACK PEOPLE TO PRESENT THE ADMINISTRATION WITH A BILL FOR SERVICES RENDERED; A BILL NOT LIMITED TO THANKS FOR SYMBOLIC ACTIONS OR FOR A TOO-SMALL HANDFUL OF GOOD JOBS FOR A FEW BLACK APPOINTEES, BUT A BILL THAT ITEMIZES SWEEPING CHANGES IN THE SYSTEM THAT HAS CONFINED BLACK PEOPLE TO POVERTY, TO DISCRIMINATION, AND TO UNEQUAL TREATMENT.

AND NOWHERE HAS THAT UNEQUAL TREATMENT BEEN MORE GLARING THAN IN EDUCATION.

FOR WE CANNOT FORGET -- NOR CAN WE LET THIS NATION FORGET -- THAT BLACK EDUCATION HAD ITS BEGINNINGS IN ILLEGALITY; THAT IT WAS A CRIME TO TEACH BLACK PEOPLE TO READ AND WRITE. FROM THAT BEGINNING, BLACK EDUCATION HAS WEATHERED BLOW AFTER BLOW -- JUST AS THE SLAVEMASTERS ATTEMPTED TO KEEP BLACK PEOPLE IN IGNORANCE SO TOO DID THEIR SUCCESSORS DESIGN A BLACK SCHOOL

SYSTEM AIMED AT DENYING BLACK CHILDREN THE SKILLS AND THE TRAINING THAT WOULD ENABLE THEM TO BECOME PRODUCTIVE, INDEPENDENT MEN AND WOMEN.

THE STORY OF BLACK EDUCATION IN AMERICA HAS BEEN THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THOSE WHO WOULD DENY US OUR RIGHTS AND THOSE AMONG US DETERMINED TO ESCAPE THE MARGINAL STATUS ASSIGNED TO BLACK PEOPLE. AND THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY TODAY REPEATS THE EARLIER BATTLES OF THE PAST.

IN ALMOST EVERY ISSUE OF RELEVANCE TO BLACK EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS, WE FIND A DETERMINED OPPOSITION INTENT ON LIMITING OUR ACCESS TO EDUCATION, AND THUS, TO THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE THAT WILL ENABLE US TO COMPETE EQUALLY FOR THE REWARDS OF OUR SOCIETY.

THE SAME EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THAT ONLY A FEW YEARS AGO WAS HELD UP TO US AS BEING THE VEHICLE FOR ADVANCEMENT AND MOBILITY BY OTHER GROUPS IS NOW DESCRIBED AS BEING INCAPABLE OF DEALING WITH BLACK CHILDREN.

WE'VE BEEN SWAMPED WITH STUDIES THAT PURPORT TO SHOW THAT SCHOOLS DON'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE. THERE ARE STUDIES THAT CONCLUDE THAT CLASS SIZE DOESN'T MATTER, THAT BUSING DOESN'T WORK, THAT EDUCATION HAS NO INFLUENCE ON FUTURE EARNINGS, THAT BLACK KIDS DON'T HAVE THE IQ IT TAKES TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL, THAT COMPENSATORY EDUCATION DOESN'T WORK AND THAT SCHOOLS CAN'T SOLVE SOCIETY'S PROBLEMS.

AND IN ADDITION TO THESE AND SIMILAR STUDIES DESIGNED TO DOWNGRADE THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION, WE FIND AT THE SAME TIME INTENSE COMPETITION FOR CONTROL OF EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONS AND FOR ACCESS TO THOSE SCHOOLS THAT AREN'T SUPPOSED TO MATTER.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, INSTEAD OF SPROUTING ROOTS IN COMMUNITY-BASED FACILITIES IS BEING SET UP AS A PLUM TO BE RIPENED AND PICKED BY TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS. CAREER EDUCATION, WHICH COULD HOLD GREAT PROMISE, IS BEING TARGETED BY THOSE WHO WOULD REDUCE IT TO THE OLD VOCATIONAL EDUCATION THAT SERVED TO CHANNEL BLACK YOUNGSTERS INTO LOW-PAY, LOW-STATUS JOBS. THE PUBLIC BLACK COLLEGES FACE A THREAT TO BLACK CONTROL AND ORIENTATION THROUGH ACTIONS DESIGNED TO MERGE OR DESEGREGATE THEM AND THUS DEPRIVE THE BLACK COMMUNITY OF A CENTRAL INSTITUTION WHILE PREDOMINATELY WHITE COLLEGES CONTINUE THEIR INDEPENDENCE WHILE RETAINING DISCRIMINATORY FEATURES.

AND EVEN THE LIMITED SPECIAL ADMISSIONS PROGRAMS TO UNIVERSITIES AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS ARE UNDER CHALLENGE, WITH THE FATE OF BLACK ENTRY INTO THE PROFESSIONS NOW IN THE HANDS OF THE SUPREME COURT, WHICH WILL RULE ON THE BAKKE CASE. IT IS VITAL THAT THE COURT UPHOLD THE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS THAT RECOGNIZE THE UNIQUE EXPERIENCE OF BLACK PEOPLE IN AMERICA, AND PROGRAMS THAT PURSUE A COMPELLING STATE INTEREST IN EQUALIZING OPPORTUNITIES. OUR NATION MUST COME TO RECOGNIZE THAT IN THE ABSENCE OF TRUE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY, RACIAL NEUTRALITY IS A MEANS OF PERPETUATING, IN MORE DISCREET FASHION, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.

IN THESE AND OTHER CONFLICTS CENTERED ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY WE SEE A DEMONSTRATION OF TWO IMPORTANT FACTS: ONE IS THAT SCHOOLS ARE VERY, VERY IMPORTANT, NO MATTER WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY. ALL THE PROPAGANDA DOWNGRADING SCHOOLS HASN'T LESSENED THE INTENSITY OF STRUGGLES ABOUT

EDUCATIONAL POLICY OR ACCESS TO SCHOOLS. IT IS ENOUGH TO NOTE THAT THOSE MOST VOCAL ABOUT THE LIMITED ROLE OF EDUCATION IN ECONOMIC OUTLOOK ARE THOSE THAT SPEND THE MOST FOR THEIR CHILDREN'S PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND ARE AMONG THOSE EMPLOYERS MOST INSISTENT ON DIPLOMAS AND CERTIFICATES AS QUALIFIERS FOR JOBS THAT NEVER REQUIRED THEM BEFORE.

A SECOND IMPORTANT FACT IS THAT THE SCHOOL SYSTEM STILL HAS AS ITS CENTRAL FUNCTION NOT THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN BUT, IN JOHN PORTER'S WORDS, THE THREE "S'S" -- SORTING, SCREENING AND SELECTING.

SCHOOLS FUNCTION AS SOCIETY'S FILTER, SORTING, SCREENING AND SELECTING PEOPLE TO ASSUME THEIR PLACE IN SOCIETY. THROUGHOUT OUR HISTORY THEY'VE SORTED BLACKS OUT OF THE SYSTEM, SCREENED MOST OF US INTO LOW-PAY, LOW-STATUS JOBS, AND SELECTED A HANDFUL TO GAIN AN INSECURE FOOTHOLD IN THE SYSTEM.

AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THAT TRADITIONAL ROLE ACCOUNTS FOR THE INTENSITY OF THE CONTROVERSIES BEING FOUGHT OUT TODAY ON THE EDUCATION BATTLEGROUND. SO LONG AS BLACKS CAN BE EXCLUDED FROM THE "THREE S" PROCESS, SO LONG AS THE LEVERS OF CONTROL REMAIN IN OTHER HANDS, THEN BLACK PEOPLE WILL ALSO BE EXCLUDED FROM OUR RIGHTFUL ROLE AS FULL PARTNERS IN THIS LAND WE HELPED BUILD.

TO DATE, WE HAVE PARADED OUR POWERLESSNESS, REACTING -- OFTEN TOO LATE -- TO MEASURES TAKEN WITHOUT CONSULTATION WITH MINORITY ORGANIZATIONS AND WITHOUT CONSIDERATION OF THE BEST INTERESTS OF BLACK CHILDREN. WE

HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MAKE SOME LIMITED IMPACT IN SOME LOCALITIES, DEPENDING UPON THE RESPONSIVENESS OF LOCAL LEADERSHIP AND THE STRENGTH OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY.

BUT IN THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES WITH NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE WE HAVE NOT MADE OUR PRESENCE FELT TO THE DEGREE THAT WE MUST. THERE ARE ISSUES TODAY THAT GO BEYOND THE FAIRLY CLEAR ONES OF CURRICULUM, STAFFING AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, WITH WHICH OUR ENERGIES AND RESOURCES HAVE BEEN MOST CONCERNED.

AN EXAMPLE OF THIS IS THE ADMINISTRATION'S NEW PLAN FOR YOUTH JOBS THAT WOULD CREATE 200,000 JOBS FOR TEENAGERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVER THE NEXT 18 MONTHS. THAT PLAN HAS SOME HOLES IN IT, BUT THE ONE GLARING OMISSION THAT COULD HAVE CHANGED IT FROM A TEMPORARY, EMERGENCY JOB PLAN INTO A LONG-TERM YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IS THE FAILURE TO INCLUDE AN EDUCATIONAL COMPONENT.

WHILE OTHERS HAGGLE ABOUT THE SCOPE AND THE COST OF THE YOUTH JOB PROGRAM WE'VE GOT TO BE IN THERE, NOT ONLY FIGHTING FOR AN EXPANDED PROGRAM, BUT ALSO GETTING THAT EDUCATIONAL COMPONENT BUILT INTO IT. WE'VE GOT TO BE IN THE CORRIDORS AND THE CLOAKROOMS WHERE THE DECISIONS ARE MADE, POINTING TO THE NEED FOR THOSE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND DEMONSTRATING THAT THEY WOULD MAKE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HELPING DEVELOP THE HUMAN AND TAX-PAYING POTENTIALS OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE AND JUST GETTING THEM OFF THE STREETS INTO LOW-SKILL TEMPORARY JOBS FOR 18 MONTHS.

THERE ARE ISSUES LIKE SCHOOL FINANCING THAT HAVE A DIRECT IMPACT ON THE FUTURE OF ALL BLACK AND POOR SCHOOL CHILDREN, THAT REQUIRE EXPERTISE

AND COMPETENCE ON THE PART OF BLACK ORGANIZATIONS IF WE ARE TO BE IN A POSITION TO INFLUENCE THE ALLOCATION OF EDUCATIONAL FUNDS. UNLESS WE CAN MARSHALL THE STATISTICS AND COMPILE THE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT OUR CLAIMS FOR MORE EQUAL EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES, WE WON'T GET THEM. UNLESS WE CAN SHARPEN OUR ORGANIZING ABILITY AND HELP BLACK PARENTS USE THEIR POLITICAL MUSCLE TO ENSURE ADEQUATE FUNDS GO TO SCHOOLS ATTENDED BY THEIR KIDS, MORE MONEY WILL GO TO BUILD SWIMMING POOLS ON SUBURBAN CAMPUSES.

THERE ARE OTHER ISSUES THAT REQUIRE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUBTLETIES OF THE CORRIDORS OF POWER, ISSUES LIKE WHETHER THE OFFICE OF EDUCATION SHOULD REMAIN IN HEW OR WHETHER IT SHOULD BE A SEPARATE DEPARTMENT. THIS IS SOMETHING THAT WILL IMPACT DIRECTLY ON OUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION, AND ALREADY STRONG BATTLE LINES ARE FORMING ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ISSUE.

BLACK EDUCATIONAL EXPERTS AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS HAVE TO HAMMER OUT A POSITION ON THIS ISSUE. WE'VE GOT TO BE IN THERE WITH THE POLITICAL SAVVY AND THE CLOUT TO HAVE IT RESOLVED THE WAY WE WANT. THAT REQUIRES MORE THAN LEISURELY STUDY AND LEARNED POSITION PAPERS. IT REQUIRES POOLING OUR EXPERTISE AND UNITING IN A COALITION TO INFLUENCE THE DECISION. AND IT'S A DECISION THAT'S GOING TO BE MADE SOON; WE DON'T HAVE THE LUXURY OF DAWDLING FOR MONTHS OVER THIS AND PLAYING HUNCHES WITH OUR CHILDREN'S LIVES.

THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE THAT'S REQUIRED, NOT ONLY ON THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE, BUT ON ALL OF THE MAJOR ISSUES AFFECTING EDUCATION. AND THAT IS THAT WE ADOPT A SPIRIT OF COOPERATION AND JOINT HELPFULNESS. WE'VE GOT

TO LEARN TO SUBMERGE OUR OWN EGOES AT TIMES FOR THE GREATER GOOD. WE'VE GOT TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE DAYS OF THE LEADER, OF THE ONE SPOKESMAN, OF THE SINGLE CHARISMATIC GUIDE, ARE OVER.

BLACK LEADERSHIP TODAY REFLECTS THE PLURALISM OF OUR INTERESTS AND THE DIVERSITY OF OUR PEOPLE. IT INCLUDES NOT ONLY THE TRADITIONAL SOURCES OF LEADERSHIP -- THE CHURCH, THE PRESS, THE PROFESSIONS, THE CIVIL RIGHTS AGENCIES, AND THE POLITICAL LEADERS -- BUT ALSO EMERGING NEW GROUPS. THESE INCLUDE THE GROWING NUMBERS OF BLACK POLITICAL APPOINTEES, BLACK CORPORATE EXECUTIVES, LOCAL COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, BLACK LABOR LEADERS, AND THE MUSHROOMING NUMBERS OF BLACK ELECTED OFFICIALS.

AND ALL OF THESE LEADERSHIP GROUPS LOOK TO BLACK EXPERTS IN LAW, MEDICINE, EDUCATION AND OTHER DISCIPLINES FOR THE RESEARCH, THE EXPERTISE AND THE AMMUNITION WITH WHICH TO WAGE THE BATTLE FOR EQUAL RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY.

THE DEGREE TO WHICH WE SUCCEED IS EXACTLY THAT DEGREE TO WHICH WE CAN MERGE OUR PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL AMBITIONS INTO A COOPERATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL BLACK PEOPLE. WE MUST WORK TOGETHER FOR, IN W.E.B. DUBOIS' WORDS, "THAT GREAT AND GUIDING IDEAL OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP."

I HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT WE ARE CONCERNED ENOUGH AND HONEST ENOUGH TO COME TOGETHER IN A SPIRIT OF DETERMINED COOPERATION, TO FORGE THE CREATIVE ALLIANCE THAT WILL ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF LITTLE BLACK CHILDREN IN GHETTO

SCHOOLS WITH PAINT CRUMBLING ON THE WALLS, CLUTCHING A READING PRIMER AND DREAMING OF BEING AN ASTRONAUT OR A SCIENTIST OR AN EDUCATOR. THAT'S WHAT WE'RE ALL HERE FOR -- TO LOOK OUT FOR THOSE CHILDREN, TO SAVE THEM FROM BEING LOST TO THE MEAN STREETS AND THE PREDATORS OF A DISCRIMINATORY SOCIETY, TO HELP THEM TO DEVELOP THEIR POTENTIAL TO THE MAXIMUM SO THAT THEY TOO, WILL ONE DAY GO FORTH AND HELP OTHERS TO FULLER, MORE MEANINGFUL LIVES.

THROUGH OUR EFFORTS, AND THROUGH THE CONTINUING UNSELFISH EFFORTS OF THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF CONCERNED BLACK PEOPLE AND PARENTS AND EDUCATORS, WE CAN HELP OUR CHILDREN BUILD A NEW LAND OF JUSTICE AND OPPORTUNITY.

BLACK PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS HELD FAST TO THAT VISION OF AN AMERICA OF EQUALITY AND JUSTICE, A VISION THAT ANIMATED THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND HAS ELUDED US SINCE. IT IS A VISION WE'VE CLUNG TO IN THE DEEPEST DUNGEONS OF SLAVERY, IN THE HARDEST HELLS OF OPPRESSION AND TODAY WE CLING TO IT STILL, IN WHAT WE HOPE WILL BE THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA.

FOR IF THE NEW MOOD OF FAITH IN IMMINENT CHANGE IS DUE IN PART TO THE BLACK ROLE IN BRINGING ABOUT NEW NATIONAL LEADERSHIP, IT ALSO DERIVES FROM A HEIGHTENED CONSCIOUSNESS OF WHO WE ARE, WHERE WE CAME FROM, AND WHERE WE ARE GOING. IT IS A CONSCIOUSNESS MADE PLAIN TO ALL AMERICANS, WHITE AND BLACK, WHO WERE MADE, MANY FOR THE FIRST TIME, SO PAINFULLY AWARE OF THE GRIM PAST THROUGH WATCHING Roots.

I THINK Roots FINALLY DROVE HOME TO MOST AMERICANS THAT THE SHIPS THAT BROUGHT KUNTA KINTE AND HIS BLACK BROTHERS AND SISTERS TO THESE SHORES WERE NOT THE MAYFLOWER. THEY DID NOT PASS A WELCOMING STATUE OF LIBERTY BEARING THE INSCRIPTION, "GIVE ME YOUR TIRED, YOUR POOR, YOUR HUDDLED MASSES YEARNING TO BREATHE FREE, THE WRETCHED REFUSE OF YOUR TEEMING SHORE. SEND THESE, THE HOMELESS TEMPEST-TOSSED TO ME, I LIFT MY LAMP BESIDE THE GOLDEN DOOR."

YES, THOSE BLACK ANCESTORS OF OURS YEARNED TO BE FREE, BUT THEY WERE HELD IN SLAVERY AND INSTEAD OF A "GOLDEN DOOR" THEY FOUND WHIPS AND CHAINS AND BRUTALITY IN STEAMING COTTON FIELDS.

Roots MADE THAT VISIBLE. MANY WHITE PEOPLE NEVER UNDERSTOOD BEFORE THAT IT WAS DIFFERENT FOR US. MANY STILL DO NOT UNDERSTAND THAT IT IS DIFFERENT TODAY, AS WELL, THAT COLOR WHICH WAS ONCE A BADGE OF SLAVERY IS TODAY A BADGE OF DISADVANTAGE. Roots WON'T MAKE PEOPLE OPEN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS TO BLACK HOMEBUYERS. IT WON'T MAKE THEM SUPPORT INTEGRATED SCHOOLS, OR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OR ANY NUMBER OF THINGS IMPORTANT TO ADVANCE BLACK STATUS AND CONDITIONS. BUT IT MAY MAKE THEM SENSITIVE TO THE NEED FOR CHANGE, AWARE OF THE TANGLED ROOTS OF PRESENT INEQUITIES, AND MORE UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEED TO OVERCOME THE NATIONAL SHAME OF EXPLOITATION AND RACISM.

AND Roots HAS A MESSAGE FOR BLACK PEOPLE, TOO. IT TAUGHT US THE CRUELTY OF THE PAST, YES, BUT IT ALSO TAUGHT US THE INNER STRENGTHS DEVELOPED IN ADVERSITY AND THE WAY OUR PEOPLE PRESERVERED, SURVIVED AND OVERCAME.

IT IS A MESSAGE OF PRIDE AND STRENGTH. ITS MESSAGE OF SELF-RELIANCE IS ONE THAT WE CAN USE TODAY, TOO. FOR WE MUST REALIZE THAT WHILE WE PRESS THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE CONGRESS TO CREATE JOBS, THEY CAN'T GO TO THE EMPLOYMENT CENTERS FOR US, THEY CAN'T TAKE THE JOB-TRAINING FOR US, AND THEY CAN'T LEARN THE SKILLS FOR US. THE PRESIDENT AND THE CONGRESS HAVE TO PROVIDE RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION, HEALTH AND HOUSING, AND CRIME CONTROL, BUT THEY CAN'T PASS THE TESTS FOR US, THEY CAN'T GO TO THE HEALTH CLINICS FOR US, THEY CAN'T TAKE CARE OF OUR HOMES FOR US, AND THEY CAN'T MAKE OUR NEIGHBORHOODS SAFE. THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION CAN'T DO IT ALL. THE CONGRESS CAN'T DO IT ALL. THE PRIVATE SECTOR CAN'T DO IT ALL. THEY CAN REMOVE THE STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO OUR PROGRESS; THEY CAN HELP END DISCRIMINATION AND PARTIALLY COMPENSATE FOR IT; THEY CAN PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK IN WHICH BLACK PEOPLE CAN FINALLY BURY THEIR CHAINS, BUT THEN CAN'T -- AND WON'T -- DO IT ALL.

BLACK PEOPLE, OURSELEVES, MUST RETAIN THIS INITIATIVE. WE MUST DO IT OURSELVES. WE DID IT FOR OURSELVES IN THE 1960s, WE CAN DO NO LESS IN THE 1970s.

WE REMEMBER FROM ROOTS THAT BLACK PEOPLE HAVE SURVIVED BECAUSE WE HELD FAST TO A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND SHARED DESTINY. THOSE IRREPLACEABLE STRENGTHS MUST NOW BE USED TO WIN EQUALITY IN A SOCIETY BASED ON INITIATIVE AND COMPETITION. THE BLACK COMMUNITY HAS AMPLY DEMONSTRATED ITS COMMITMENT TO THE WORK ETHIC; OF ALL AMERICANS, WE HAVE WORKED HARDEST AND LONGEST FOR THE LEAST. BLACK PEOPLE

HAVE DEMONSTRATED THEIR ABILITY TO SURMOUNT DIFFICULTIES AND OVERCOME RACISM. WE HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT WE HAD THE SKILL AND THE KNOWLEDGE TO SUCCEED WHENEVER DOORS WERE OPENED.

THE MILLIONS OF BLACK PEOPLE WHO MARCHED TO THE POLLS ON ELECTION DAY WERE AFFIRMING THEIR BELIEF IN THE DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES EMBEDDED IN OUR CONSTITUTION. THEY WERE EXPRESSING THEIR FAITH IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS AND BLACK PEOPLE HAVE HELD FAST TO THAT FAITH DESPITE THE FACT THAT, FOR ALMOST ALL OF OUR HISTORY, THIS NATION REJECTED OUR NEEDS AND DESPISED OUR ASPIRATIONS. STILL WE CLUNG TO OUR VISION OF DEMOCRATIC EQUALITY.

IT IS THAT VISION WE CELEBRATE TONIGHT. ALL OF US MUST GATHER OUR STRENGTH FOR A FINAL DRIVE TO ATTAIN A JUST SOCIETY WHERE EQUALITY AND PROSPERITY ARE SHARED FAIRLY. LET US RECOGNIZE THE STRENGTHS OF OUR HERITAGE OF FREEDOM, THE POWERFUL SENSE OF JUSTICE IN OUR TRADITIONS, AND THE LIMITLESS BOUNDARIES OF OUR ASPIRATIONS.

TO THAT END, LET US WORK TOGETHER. LET US BRING A MESSAGE OF HOPE TO OUR PEOPLE, A MESSAGE OF PRIDE AND DIGNITY, A MESSAGE LIKE THE ONE OSSIE DAVIS WROTE FOR REVEREND PURLIE IN THE DRAMA "PURLIE VICTORIOUS:"

> "MY FRIENDS, I FIND BEING BLACK, A THING OF BEAUTY.
> A JOY, A STRENGTH. A SECRET CUP OF GLADNESS.
> A NATIVE LAND IN NEITHER TIME NOR PLACE;
> A NATIVE LAND IN EVERY NEGRO'S FACE. BE LOYAL
> TO YOURSELF, YOUR SKIN, YOUR HAIR, YOUR LIPS,

YOUR SOUTHERN SPEECH, YOUR LAUGHING KINDNESS. A NEGRO KINGDOM'S VAST AS ANY OTHER. ACCEPT IN FULL THE SWEETNESS OF YOUR BLACKNESS; NOT WISHING TO BE WHITE NOR RED NOR YELLOW NOR ANY OTHER RACE OR FACE, BUT THIS. FAREWELL MY DEEP AND AFRICANIC BROTHERS. BE BRAVE. KEEP FREEDOM IN THE FAMILY AND DO WHAT YOU CAN FOR THE WHITE FOLKS."

NOW, MAY THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES GO WITH YOU; THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE STAND BY YOU; THE BILL OF RIGHTS PROTECT YOU AND MAY YOUR OWN DREAMS BE YOUR ONLY BOUNDARIES HENCEFORTH NOW AND FOREVER.

: : : :